

Preservation is Progress

# Chautauqua Historical Society

Volume 3, Issue 1

February, 2005

- The Newsletter is published three times a year: winter, spring, and fall.
- The Newsletter is a membership benefit at the Piasa Bluffs Assembly (PBA), Patron, and Regular levels.
- **PBA and Patron** membership include a membership in the Chautauqua Network
- CHS members are encouraged to submit articles to the editor for inclusion in the Newsletter.

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*We have 4 PBA, 55 Patron, and 19 Regular members, and send the Newsletter to 129 households.*

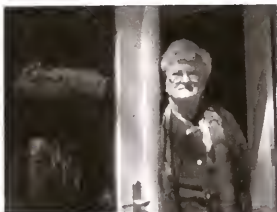




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## The President's message

This column is our



**Annual Report.** Our membership season runs from July 1 to June 30 and our fiscal year is on a calendar year basis. So, our Annual Report is the mix-and-match variety. The 2004 season was a rewarding one for Chautauqua and for the Soci-

ety in particular.

Our 2004-paid membership included 61 Patron and 6 Regular members. With complimentary members, we mailed the June 2004 Newsletter to 109 households. Our present (2005) membership includes 4 Piasa Bluff Assembly members, 55 Patrons, 7 Regular, and 12 Clarkson members. The latter represent folks who gave a leadership gift to the Sundial project, and who were not previously members of the Society. The Newsletter is being mailed now to 129 households. Our complimentary members are from other Chautauquas, local historical societies, libraries, and so on. Only a few members from 2004 did not renew for 2005.

Our financial situation is sound. Income consists of membership dues and profits from the Jersey Door operation. The Kentucky Home will have two separate shops next season. The LCIA will operate the Indian Giver and the Historical Society will run the Jersey Door. Profits from this activity have been used to restore parts of the building, and we will continue to support this activity. Our normal expenses include administrative and office charges for paper, computer printer ink, postage, photocopying, small equipment, duplicating, and so on. We have also print the Newsletter professionally. We purchase books for use in research and to add to the collection about Chautauquas that is growing each year in the community library. When we sponsor a special project (the Memorial Sundial Restoration) we realize one-time expenses. We maintain a complete copy of all Society records and documentation, including financial information

that we keep for review in the library for members, researchers, and other interested parties.

A 2005 goal is to increase our ability to handle acquisitions and collections. What we term the "Jacoby" collection is held by the Elsie Museum and stored at Principia. The "Voss" collection is held by and stored at the Jersey County Historical Society. We have a large number of documents and materials in several private locations at Chautauqua, and in the Administration Building. We hope to list and describe these materials systematically in 2005 and provide responsible archival storage, and have committed up to \$1000 for this project. We will purchase archival storage boxes, acid-free photo and postcard sleeves, materials to store newspaper and magazine articles, and so on. We need, for example, professional supplies to care for the Scrapbook that provided much of the information about the 1954 Air Force Academy selection issue.

In the last Newsletter I asked for your help in finding old program books. Recent archival acquisitions include the Zimmerman baptismal certificate, a 1905 and 1906 issue of the monthly *Piasa Chautauquan* and more than 40 postcard and photo images made available by the Zimmerman's, copied to CD. With the permission of Eric Pistorius, a Jerseyville lawyer, we also copied his collection of cards and photos of Grafton in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and Elsie in the 1950's. Our computer image collection is growing rapidly.

We want to develop an archival system over the next few years that will be professionally responsible. Then we can approach the present holders of Chautauqua material and ask that the materials be released/returned to our care. Archival management is a substantial responsibility, and we hope the Society with the support of membership will be able to succeed in this objective. When you shop at the Jersey Door you are investing in saving our history.

Society officials for 2005 are Rose Tomlinson (President), Judy Hurd (Vice President), Chris Hagin (Treasurer), Tim Tomlinson (Secretary), and Paul Brammeier and Pat Miller (Directors).

*Rose Tomlinson*

### PRESERVATION IS PROGRESS

Address inquiries and other communications to  
Tim Tomlinson  
Editor, CHS Newsletter  
Post Office Box 87, Elsie, Illinois 62028  
Phone: 618-374-1518; email: Trt1933@aol.com  
Copy/Proof Readers: Kathy Brammeier, Gary Cooper, Susan Seiber  
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*The mission and purpose of the Chautauqua Historical Society is the preservation and enhancement of the historic traditions and culture of New Piasa Chautauqua, Chautauqua, Illinois, the encouragement of historical research on the Chautauqua community and nearby historic districts, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets, and other written material on New Piasa Chautauqua, remaining permanent assemblies and chautauquas in other parts of the United States, and the national Chautauqua movement, and the establishment of an educational program to inform the Chautauqua community and the general public of the historical and educational value of New Piasa Chautauqua.*



### *Remembrances of Things Past*

Daniel Zimmerman's parents, Edward and Edna, were local folk who came from German Lutheran immigrant stock. Edna Steirman Zimmerman, according to Daniel, was a born storyteller and teacher. She assisted with Sunday School classes at Chautauqua and appeared often on the Auditorium stage in the 1910s as a storyteller, part of the summer Chautauqua program.

Edward Zimmerman was hard working, frugal, and industrious. In 1916, a "single white male" as described by a Warranty Deed, he purchased 80 acres of land from New Piasa Chautauqua, over 25% of the original landholding that the Piasa Bluffs Assembly purchased in 1886. In 1923 he built the house in Fern Glen in which Daniel and Ann Zimmerman now live, and in which Daniel and his older brother (Paul, 1921) and younger sister (Mary, 1926) grew up. Ed Zimmerman supplied summer Chautauquans with milk and vegetables for many years. He was a valued builder and handyman. He worked often for Bill and Gordon Grundmann's grandfather, whom he called a good friend. He built the Eckhard, Palmer, and Dickman (now Trabue) cottages, worked on Riverview (Wagers-Miller), Summer Rest (Sam Schmidt), the White cottage, and on community buildings including the original Administration Building. The Yellow Balloon, once the Brainerd Store, originally was sited where the Town Hall is now. Daniel's father and other laborers moved the Brainerd Store to its present site by setting the building on telephone poles and rolling it several yards to the south.

Daniel William Zimmerman was born on February 2, 1923, in the family home near Grafton, Illinois. That summer he was christened in the Chautauqua auditorium by the Reverend Francis Marion Van Treese, on August 26, 1923. The Kupferle Chapel had not yet been built, and the presiding minister and date were auspicious: Van Treese was an important member of Chautauqua's 1885 Founding Committee, and August 26 was frequently celebrated as "Founders Day." Coincidentally, Dan's sister Mary was born on August 26, 1926. Mary was baptized also in the Auditorium (August 26, 1928), but with a different minister officiating. The Rev. Van Treese had passed away in 1927, after moving to California.

Life in the Valley was exciting for a young boy. Daniel attended kindergarten in the small room behind the Chapel, and then attended the Elsie elementary school. He and his brother walked along the railroad tracks, and sometimes in bad weather paid the 6c train fare. He recalls the Mississippi flooding frequently, and even tornadoes, one of which tore off the roof of the Chautauqua Station (Stand/Pavilion), with parts of it landing in the pool. His boyhood friends were other Valley children, and during the summer season, the children of Chautauqua. Daniel described Billy Clarkson as "one of my best friends growing up." He and brother Paul had the usual farm children chores—hoeing, weeding, tending livestock, milking, and cutting wood for the family stoves. They mowed lawns and raked leaves for the Chautauqua community, and, instructed by their industrious father, became skilled at carpentry, painting, plumbing, and more.

Daniel attended high school in Grafton, starting in 1936, and in 1937 a school bus started to pick up Valley children at the Chautauqua post office at the end of the Board Walk. Since the Grafton school didn't have a senior class, he went to Jerseyville for his last year of high school. After graduation, he worked for his dad, then the Alton Glass Works, then Olin Steel. He was inducted into the United States Army in 1943, had his basic training in Florida, and had duties in Texas, California, and Seattle as part of the Army Air Force. He was not sent overseas. Daniel was discharged in Chicago in 1946.

While in the service, Daniel became interested in the ministry, and after his release enrolled in the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. His interest was in foreign missions. As a student, he met Ann Cady, who would become his wife and helpmate. Ann's goal was to be a missionary to Africa. They were married in April 1949; at the wedding a violinist played "I'll Go Where You Want Me To Go." The newlyweds spent part of their first summer in Fern Glen, helping Dan's parents with the chores. In June, they were accepted officially as Evangelical Baptist missionaries, and by November were on their way to Algiers for lessons in the French language. After celebrating Christmas in Algiers, they left for Niger and six months later settled in the city of Gao, which would

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be their headquarters” for most of the next three decades. Four of their five children were born in Africa; they were home-schooled by Ann and correspondence courses. The family was able to take “furloughs” from time to time, generally returning to Fern Glen and the Jerseyville area. At the end of one furlough, the two older boys remained with family friends in Grafton so they could attend high school in the States. Daniel and Ann returned to Africa to continue their missionary activity until they retired in 1981—a ministry of love for 31 years. They returned to Fern Glen Valley.

**TRT** In the 1930s, you were between 10-17 years old. Can you describe summers at Chautauqua during that period, and how were folks in the Valley “connected” to Chautauqua?

**DZ** Most of the families in the Valley had some direct connection with Chautauqua. Tho-

Dan Zimmerman and I spent about four hours talking, and he also wrote out some notes in response to questions I posed before our talk/interview. We recorded about an hour of the talk, and I took extensive notes. The material that follows is not a true verbatim interview, but rather paraphrases what Dan said in response to my questions. The “answers” also reflect what he wrote down prior to the interview, and some material comes from a wonderful book prepared for Dan and Ann by their children on the occasion of the Zimmerman’s 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. The book is a worthy testimony to two very remarkable people. Dan took time to read this article and thus had an opportunity to correct me where necessary. We both agree that the article is a reasonable representation of what he remembers about growing up near Chautauqua and how he described that experience to me.

Tim Tomlinson

mas Brown, for example, was a groundskeeper/custodian for over 35 years, until 1960. His sons delivered newspapers, and many of we children in the Valley delivered papers, milk, berries, and vegetables to summer folks. Tom Brown’s older brother Charles was a stonemason. There is a small (no longer in use) quarry near the bluff above Fern Glen Creek where local stone was cut for use at Rock Bottom and for the construction of the rock wall



Local men cutting ice c.1910, this photo from the Zimmerman collection. The Inn is in the background, in what is now Flint Park.

that ran from Play School down to the Chapel entrance, and which only recently has been replaced. My family also did odd jobs for Chautauquans to earn money. I milked our two cows and sold the milk in Chautauqua. My father was a builder and re-modeler for Chautauqua cottages and public buildings. The skills he taught me were very important to my missionary work in Africa during the many years Ann and I spent there. Some folks in Fern Glen worked in Grafton or Alton, but were still connected to Chautauqua. There were special season passes that we could buy. The passes allowed us to participate in all Chautauqua events, including the use of the pool, movies and programs at the Auditorium, attending Chapel services and Sunday School, and so on. I remember two occasions very well. When I was only five and my sister Mary was two, we marched in the Children’s Day parade. This was 1928, and my brother Paul was seven. My mother brought us to Springfield Avenue where the parade was forming, and placed us in line for marching. She told Paul and me that we must be very careful and take good care of Mary. The three of us marched hand in hand, Mary in the middle, down the streets with the rest of the Chautauqua children. In those days, the parade moved toward the boardwalk, up around the (present) Adams cottage and then down St. Louis Avenue. Near the Boardwalk, Mary saw my mother in the watching and approving crowd, and began to

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cry and wail something awful. I was mortified and embarrassed, and she didn't stop until she could no longer see my mother. I still tease her about that today.

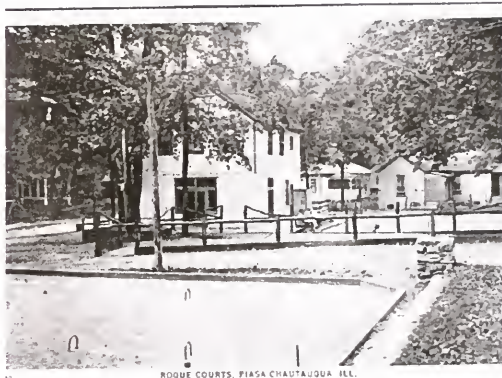
Another strong memory is connected to an almost fatal accident. In 1937, I was 14 years old. If you were older than 14 you couldn't compete in the Chautauqua competitions. The previous year I had managed a "third," and was determined to get a "first" in the 100 yard dash, the steeplechase, or the softball throw—or all three. The day of the competition, I wanted to practice but couldn't until Paul and I hauled wood home that my father had split. My mother would use the wood for heating water and baking. We hitched our two horses, Pat and Dick, to our wagon and went to get the logs. Loading them was easy, in spite of the heat. We were almost finished and I got on the wagon to move it forward a little. One rein had fallen between the two horses. Steadying myself with my hand on Dick's back, I reached down for the rein. I lost my balance, startling the horses. They raced down the hill, with me trying to hold on one of the reins, their hooves kicking dirt and dust at me, and me bouncing back and forth along the wagon tongue as the loaded wagon careened forward. I fell unconscious to the road, the horses and wagon racing on, only to be stopped by a neighbor.

As I awoke I could hear Paul shouting, "Is he dead, is he dead?" My back was very, very painful, but I was not dying. My father was able to get help and I was taken in a neighbor's car to St. Joseph's Hospital in Alton. The injuries turned out to be minor, but I was sore for a few weeks. I had time to think, and my parents reminded me that God had a purpose in saving my life. That purpose turned out to be service to God. I never did get a Chautauqua "first," and my interest in sports declined after that summer incident.

**TRT** The 30s were the heart of the Great Depression. What was happening at Chautauqua?

**DZ** Six families lived in Fern Glen, long-time families. We also had a number of temporary residents, some who lived in tents in the summer, and were able to rent Chautauqua cottages for the winters. This was, by the way, not entirely related

to the hardships of the Depression. For years, many of the "winterized" cottages were either lived in by the owners or rented for the winter season. The character of the Mississippi changed during this decade. Prior to the Alton Dam (1936), there were many more sand bars in the river than now. These were favorite swimming places, as was the "sandy" shoreline. What we now sometimes call Alton Lake didn't exist. Local workers used to cut ice in the river and some of it was stored in an icehouse by the Chautauqua back gate. That area was turned into a horse barn in the 1920s. Over 15 horses were available for riding in the 1930s, and Fern Glen was



Original Administration Building and Comfort House with two Roque courts, c. 1928, below, dedication of new building in 1934 from the Zimmerman collection.

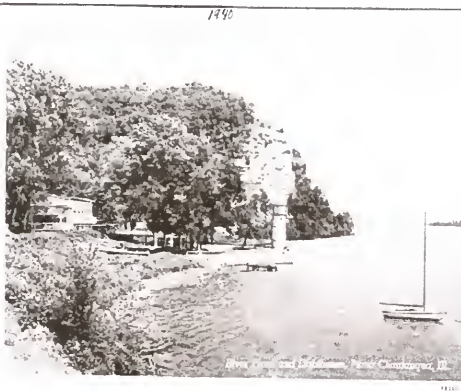
a favorite riding trail. They sure could stir up dust when running fast. Riding was a favorite pastime of many Chautauquans. The back gate, by the way, was located inside of what is now the Laffler cottage on Jersey Avenue.





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The main sports in Chautauqua's early years were horseshoes, roque, tennis, and softball. In the 30s, volleyball, table tennis, and shuffleboard became popular. And it seemed as if there was a new community project every summer. In 1931 the Post Office was moved from in front of the Chapel to the Boardwalk. The next year the Playground was moved from near Kentucky Home to a site between the Spring Hotel and the Chapel. In 1933 a new sidewalk was built from the cafeteria (Town Hall) down to the Boardwalk. The original two-storied Administration Building/Comfort House was torn down in 1934, and a new concrete block Administration Building built the same year. In 1935 the Midway (soda fountain/ice cream parlor) was built (now Play School), and a new cafeteria was constructed (Town Hall) the next year. In 1937, the first floor of the hotel was remodeled for LCIA card parties. The Wood Shop was built in 1938, and in 1939 new swimming pool showers were installed, with a dance pavilion above. The



present lighthouse was built in 1940, along with a rock wall and sandy beach along the riverbank.

Every summer milk and vegetable peddlers from the Valley and surrounding area would visit Chautauqua regularly, as would laundry and cleaning service vans from Alton. Without a resident icehouse, O. J. Richy's "Ice and Coal"

service made ice deliveries, looking for a tell-tale sign in a cottage window that would tell the vendor how many pounds of ice were needed for summer refrigeration.

**TRT** In your mind, who were the "famous" Chautauqua characters, its leaders, its movers and shakers?

**DZ** Well, I didn't know Reverend Van Treese, who christened me, but the Reverend Johnson, who christened my sister, was an important person, as were many of the early religious leaders. My father knew well and respected Dr. Grundmann, the one who built Villa Mexico. Mrs. W. K. Norris was an important woman at Chautauqua, as was Mrs. Johnson, the Reverend's wife. Mrs. Eugene Gaskins, Mrs. Behymer, and Mrs. Georgia (McAdams) Clifford were also influential. The leaders of the Chautauqua Board were important—they made the decisions that continued the building process in the 30s and 40s, even during the Depression and war years. For me, however, after my teens and until Ann and I returned to the Valley in 1981, I had little contact with Chautauqua.

**TRT** You were able to visit with Beatrice Dickman Swarm this past summer, when she and her son visited Chautauqua. That must have brought back memories?

**DZ** Yes, Bea Dickman was a few years older than me when I was in my teens, and her cousin Billy (Clarkson) was one of my very good friends. He was active in the community and was one of the birding club leaders, along with Bill Osborn. It was good to visit with Bea, especially at the rededication of the Billy Clarkson sundial. She has a lot of stories about Chautauqua to tell.

**TRT** I should probably arrange for an interview with her. Thank you, Daniel, so much for spending these several hours with me and sharing

Dan Zimmerman donated a number of archival documents to the Historical Society, including the original of the Baptismal Certificate shown on the front page of this Newsletter.



## *A Chautauqua Biography*

There is a document in our records with a very long title: *A Brief Account Of The Piasa Bluff Assembly, Now Called The New Piasa Chautauqua Association, Jersey County, Illinois*. It's a copy, typed (from when typing was truly typing), undated, three pages in length, and has a notation on the reverse of the last page that "This article was written by F. M. Van Treese, the last survivor of the committee who selected the ground and organized the Piasa Bluffs Assembly."

Reverend Francis Marion Van Treese was born on January 29, 1844 in Hendricks County, Indiana. A Civil War veteran, he enlisted in the Fifth Illinois Cavalry Regiment at the age of 17 and served from 1861-65. One biographer states that his early education opportunities were limited, but that he was industrious and dedicated, qualities that allowed him to get ahead in life. He was involved in business in Willow Hill (Jasper County, near Effingham) for two years, and then became a Methodist Episcopal minister, associated with the Southern Illinois Conference.

The 1873-74 McKendree College "catalog" lists a F. M. Van Treese from Greenville, Indiana as a freshman Classical major. We have no evidence that Van Treese had any formal education and he may have enrolled as a college student to further his career in the ministry. No such student is listed in subsequent classes. However, in 1875 and for several years thereafter, Van Treese is listed in the catalogs as a member of the "Visiting Committee," representing the Southern Illinois Conference. He appears as a college Trustee in the 1880s, serving at the same time with Rev. Benjamin St. James Fry, another Chautauqua founding father. The Commencement Program for 1893 lists Van Treese as an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree recipient.

He married Avis Check in 1868. They had six sons and one daughter. Van Treese held ministerial posts in several southern Illinois towns, including Jerseyville. He served a term as district Superintendent for the Alton and Vandalia Districts. As Executive Secretary of the Conference Endowment Fund (1915), he raised \$124,000 for the retired preachers fund, retiring himself in 1922. When his wife passed away in 1926, Van Treese "set his house in order," donated his library to McKendree College, and moved to California. He died in 1927, spending the last year of his life visiting three sons who lived in California. He is buried next to his wife in the College Hill Cemetery, Lebanon, Illinois, adjacent to McKendree College.

In his own words (see *A Brief Account...*)

Van Treese was a member of the committee that was instructed to locate a suitable site for a Western Chautauqua. Several members of the committee and their wives visited our valley on July 7, 1885. They were impressed with the locale, and especially the "Piasa Spring." Van Treese may have held the first religious service in our community on that day. He states that their object was to "maintain a Summer Resort for literary, scientific and religious instruction and culture similar to the great Chautauqua Lake Assembly."

Van Treese was active in Chautauqua affairs in the first few decades of our community, although he does not appear as a cottage owner until 1911 (Hormell cottage). He was certainly active in our religious events, even after the Reorganization of 1909. He christened Daniel William Zimmerman in the Chautauqua Auditorium (see page 1) on August 26, 1923. His daughter, Blanche Van Treese MacMachin, appears in New Piasa Chautauqua lease documents in 1918 as the leaseholder for Dave and Chris Hagin's cottage. She also held the leasehold for Don and Lyn Bryant's cottage from 1918 to 1950, when it was taken over by her daughter. After her mother's death in 1926, her father assigned her the leasehold for the Hormell cottage. Because many of the Association records are incomplete, we have no record of when she relinquished that leasehold.

Francis Marion Van Treese was a genuine Chautauqua founding father, a minister who enjoyed his ministry and whose accomplishments include creating and fostering the Western Chautauqua. His colleagues and those he served for 60 years held him in wide esteem. It appears he deserved his honorary doctorate. His early limited education notwithstanding, it appears he deserved his honorary doctorate.



REV. F. M. VAN TRESE, D. D.

This photo appears in Ralph Osborn's book, *A Centennial*. The date and source are not known





### ***Two Weeks at a Time: Fountain Park Chautauqua, Remington, Indiana***

The success of the Chautauqua experiment by John Heyl Vincent and Lewis Miller at Fair Point on Chautauqua Lake, New York in 1874 prompted the creation of independent chautauquas across the country. One such setting was the Fountain Park Chautauqua Assembly, organized in 1895 and the sponsor of a summer program every year since. Founder Robert Parker, president of the Bank of Remington, purchased land in 1893 as "an ideal place for an annual, out-of-doors assembly to be held for the people of Northwestern Indiana to meet to discuss religious, scientific and literary subjects."

The site was named Fountain Park for an artistic feature planned as a central element of the grounds. The 1895 Assembly lasted ten days, and meetings were held in the Tabernacle, built at Parker's expense. By-laws were approved in 1897, and by 1899 the assembly program was extended to two weeks. The present hotel was built in 1898, and silent movies were shown that



year. From 1895-1902 the Assembly was a Christian Church project, and Parker frequently covered operating deficits. Fountain Park was incorporated and issued capital stock in 1902.

Chautauquans from other "permanent" assemblies can relate easily to the story of Fountain Park. William Jennings Bryan lectured before an estimated 8000 people in 1907. A Women's Improvement Association was formed in 1911. Today, members meet on Wednesday afternoons and they are committed to the beautification of the grounds. In 1983 the Association produced a cookbook, and in 1990 sponsored a successful "cottage walk." And, like many other Chautauquas, Fountain Park faced economic adversity. The Bank of Remington failed in 1907, and Robert Parker withdrew from the project in 1908. But the program was firmly established: "...at the appointed

*time, August 15 to 30, 1908, the Assembly will be held and we ask the support and cooperation of Remington and all the surrounding towns and county to help us carry on the good work of Fountain Park..."* There was a 1908 season.

The land is owned by the corporation and leased in twenty-year increments. The first cottage was built in 1899. By 1905 forty cottages had been constructed. Since 1902, at the direction of cottage owners, all cottages (and tents) are located outside the Grove, the center of the Assembly's activity. Today there are seventy-three cottages on the site.



Within the Grove are located the 600-seat Tabernacle, art buildings for classes, a museum, recreational hall, a food stand, gazebo, and a playground and basketball court. The present Tabernacle (Auditorium) is listed on the National List of Historic Theater Buildings, National Trust Library. The original building was renovated and enlarged in 1949, and was replaced in 1958-60.

A daily/weekly admission is charged. The 17.3 acre site has an area dedicated to tent and trailer camping for Assembly residents and their guests. The hotel provides rooms for visitors and meals for its guests, cottage owners, campers, and daily patrons from the area. Rose and Tim Tomlinson visited Fountain Park Chautauqua in the summer of 2004, while traveling to the annual Chautauqua Network meeting at Bay View, Michigan. They stayed and ate in the hotel, where the size of the room and family-style meals was like going back in time. They wandered over the grounds, and attended an evening program in the Tabernacle. They can attest that Fountain Park prospers, *two weeks at a time*. In 2005, the community will celebrate its 110<sup>th</sup> consecutive assembly.

*Photos courtesy of Tim Tomlinson, 2004.*

Go to [www.fountain-park.org](http://www.fountain-park.org) for more information.



